

2026 Davee Foundation Lecture and Resident Research Day

Abstract

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Title: Domestic Violence Screening in Female Latin American Immigrants in the U.S.

Background: Intimate partner violence (IPV) is a pervasive public health issue affecting individuals worldwide, with unique cultural, social, and structural factors influencing its prevalence and detection among recently immigrated Latin American women. Cultural and societal pressures and expectations have historically determined discussion of IPV to be a private matter often not reported to law enforcement in many Latin American communities, resulting in a lack of screening tools and adequate education regarding the subject for both providers and the general population. Upon immigration to the United States, other barriers commonly arise—including, but not limited to, cultural differences regarding family structures, language barriers, and stressors regarding legal status—further inhibiting the ability to report IPV. Analyzing the cultural differences, history of reporting within this community, and resources currently in place in their countries of origin and in the US are essential in determining the accuracy of current IPV screening tools available to recent Latin American immigrants.

Objective: This literature review aims to analyze current IPV screening tools available to women recently immigrated from Latin America, as well as determine their adequacy and accuracy in capturing IPV experiences given recognized cultural differences between those from a Latin American country and those from the United States. Further, it aims to elucidate the factors that limit the effectiveness of current screening tools.

Methods: To characterize how IPV is understood, screened for, and dealt with in the recent immigrants’ home countries in Latin America compared to in the United States, this literature review utilizes specific search terms like “Intimate partner violence/IPV”, “domestic violence/DV” , “Latin American” and “immigrant” to search for studies addressing IPV prevalence, cultural perceptions of violence, and screening practices.

Results and Conclusions: Studies suggest that due to a host of reasons, particularly cultural factors, education regarding IPV and thus screening for IPV in Latin American countries is still largely inadequate. In the US, IPV is generally underreported by recent immigrant populations of Latin Americans, due to the aforementioned factors as well as the new barriers in place as recent immigrants. Many instruments fail to account for differing definitions of violence, migration-related stressors, and barriers to disclosure,

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leading to reduced sensitivity and potential misclassification. Newer screening tools like HITS are beginning to bridge the gaps between recently immigrated individuals of Latin American descent and other demographics of women in the US. Further research on IPV screening tools, culturally responsive and trauma-informed care, advances in adequate access, and comprehensive IPV education in, not just Latin American populations, but others based in the US (providers and the general public alike) as well are desperately needed to improve our outcomes in IPV screening in this vulnerable population.